



## INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(51) International Patent Classification 6 :  E21B 7/20, 10/62	A1	(11) International Publication Number: WO 99/64713  (43) International Publication Date: 16 December 1999 (16.12.99)
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(21) International Application Number: PCT/GB99/01816

(22) International Filing Date: 9 June 1999 (09.06.99)

(30) Priority Data:  
 9812554.5 11 June 1998 (11.06.98) GB  
 9814597.2 7 July 1998 (07.07.98) GB

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(81) Designated States: AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, CA, CH, CN, CU, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, UA, UG, US, UZ, VN, YU, ZW, ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, SD, SL, SZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

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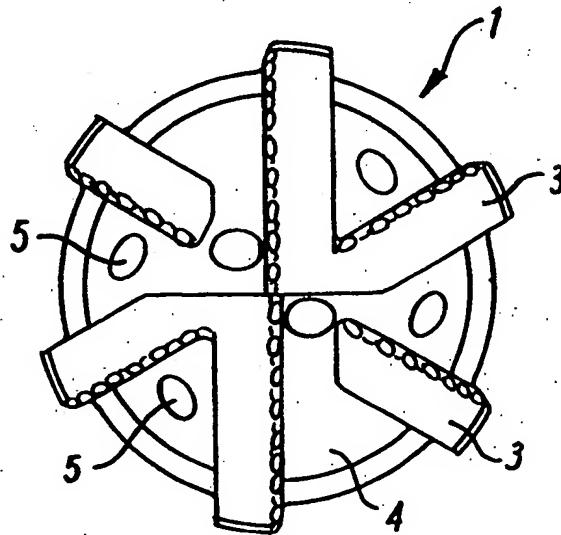
With international search report.

Before the expiration of the time limit for amending the claims and to be republished in the event of the receipt of amendments.

(54) Title: A DRILLING TOOL

## (57) Abstract

A casing drilling shoe (1) is disclosed which is adapted for attachment to a casing string and comprises an outer drilling section (2) constructed of a relatively hard material such as steel and an inner section (4) constructed of a readily drillable material such as aluminium. The drilling shoe further includes a means (7) for controllably displacing the outer drilling section to enable the shoe to be drilled through using a standard drill bit and subsequently penetrated by a reduced diameter casing string or liner.



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12 **A DRILLING TOOL**

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14 The invention has an application particularly, but not  
15 exclusively, in relation to the exploration for oil and  
16 gas. More specifically, the present invention concerns a  
17 casing drilling shoe primarily for use in oil well  
18 drilling.

19

20 When drilling subterranean formations for the purpose of  
21 oil exploration it is normal to firstly drill a section  
22 of hole of a particular diameter and then remove the  
23 drill bit from the well bore. A tubular member of lesser  
24 diameter, known as casing, is placed in the well bore and  
25 subsequently the annulus between the drilled hole and the  
26 outside of the casing is filled with cement. The purpose  
27 of the cement is to isolate certain of the subterranean  
28 strata from each other. The next operation is to pass  
29 through the casing with a smaller diameter drill bit and  
30 drill the further section of hole beyond the previously  
31 attained depth. This sequence is repeated as many times  
32 as necessary, with smaller and smaller components, until  
33 the ultimate desired depth of the well is achieved.

34

1 Positioned at the end of each casing string is a rounded  
2 guiding component known as a shoe. Typically, the  
3 leading edge of the shoe is constructed from cement, to  
4 enable it to be easily drilled through by the next drill  
5 bit.

6

7 The cost of oil exploration particularly in offshore  
8 regions is extremely high. For instance, the operating  
9 cost of a semi-submersible drill rig is often in excess  
10 of \$100,000 per day (June 1998). Thus it is in the  
11 interest of the operator to minimise the time taken to  
12 drill a well. At great depths, the round trip time to  
13 pull out a drill bit and replace it with another one can  
14 be many hours. This "trip" time is seen as non-  
15 productive and wasteful, and a significant advantage can  
16 be gained, if, having drilled to target depth the drill  
17 bit did not have to be removed from the well bore. In  
18 this way, a trip could be saved

19

20 A proposed solution would be to attach the drill bit to  
21 the leading end of the casing string and drill to target  
22 depth and then cement the casing. Certain advances in  
23 recent years have rendered this solution more viable,  
24 including the provision of premium casing threads able to  
25 take the necessary drilling torque, and rotary top drives  
26 able to transmit the torque directly to the trailing end  
27 of a drill string are commonplace.

28

29 However, technical difficulties have not entirely been  
30 overcome and this is clearly evidenced by the fact that  
31 the industry has not adopted "drilling with casing" to  
32 date.

33

1 One major remaining issue concerns the drill bit itself.  
2 By design drill bits are robust devices able to withstand  
3 the rigours of a downhole environment. They are  
4 generally made from hard materials such as steel or  
5 tungsten carbide matrix. After cementing the drilled-in  
6 casing the subsequent drill bit would have to pass  
7 through the previous one before exiting the end of the  
8 casing string. Unfortunately, modern drill bits  
9 optimised for rock removal are unable to drill through  
10 the materials from which they themselves are constructed  
11 without sustaining a level of damage which would render  
12 the task of drilling the next section of rock formation  
13 impossible. It is possible to drill through a drill bit  
14 with special tools known as mills, but these tools are  
15 unable to penetrate rock formations effectively and so  
16 the mill would have to be "tripped" from the hole and  
17 replaced with a drill bit. In this case, the trip saving  
18 advantage gained by drilling with casing would have been  
19 lost.

20

21 Thus it is recognised in the present invention that  
22 considerable advantage is to be gained in the provision  
23 of a casing shoe that is able to drill rock formations  
24 effectively, but which itself is capable of being drilled  
25 by standard oilfield drill bits.

26

27 Drilling shoes have been available in the past  
28 specifically for attachment to casing, although usually  
29 for special applications such as a situation where the  
30 lowermost rock strata of a section of a well to be  
31 drilled are extremely unconsolidated and there is a  
32 consequential risk that after the drill bit is removed  
33 from the well the rock strata may collapse into the well  
34 bore. This then renders the process of placing the casing

1 in the well bore difficult or impossible. Such casing  
2 shoes have invariably been made from the hard materials  
3 associated with normal drill bits and as such cannot be  
4 drilled through.

5

6 Also, casing whilst drilling systems have been and  
7 continue to be available to the industry. One such  
8 system involves running a casing string and a drill  
9 string in tandem. Attached to the leading end of the  
10 casing string is a core type bit able to cut a "kerf" of  
11 formation. Positioned at the leading end of the drill  
12 string is a drill bit driven by a hydraulic motor. Thus,  
13 the core bit and the drill bit together can drill a hole  
14 of the required diameter. Prior to performing the  
15 cementing operation however, the drill bit has to be  
16 removed from the well bore and thus the expensive trip is  
17 not saved.

18

19 Probably the apparatus which comes closest to overcoming  
20 the afore-described problems is known as a reamer shoe.  
21 Reamer shoes have become available over the last few  
22 years and are devices that are able to drill over the  
23 extreme outer diameter of the tool but which have an  
24 inner section manufactured from a material which is  
25 drillable with drill bits. The objective or utility of  
26 these tools, however, is to help the casing string enter  
27 a difficult well bore and when landed and cemented, pose  
28 no obstruction to the subsequent drill bit.

29

30 According to the present invention there is provided a  
31 casing drilling shoe adapted for attachment to a casing  
32 string; wherein the shoe comprises an outer drilling  
33 section constructed of a relatively hard material and an  
34 inner section constructed of a readily drillable

1 material, and wherein means is provided for controllably  
2 displacing the outer drilling section to enable the shoe  
3 to be drilled through using a standard drill bit and  
4 subsequently penetrated by a reduced diameter casing  
5 string or liner.

6

7 Optionally, the outer section may be made of steel and  
8 the inner section may be made of aluminium.

9

10 Preferably, the outer section is provided with one or  
11 more blades, wherein the blades are moveable from a first  
12 or drilling position to a second or displaced position.  
13 Preferably, when the blades are in the first or drilling  
14 position they extend in a lateral or radial direction to  
15 such extent as to allow for drilling to be performed over  
16 the full face of the shoe. This enables the casing shoe  
17 to progress beyond the furthest point previously attained  
18 in a particular well.

19

20 The means for displacing the outer drilling section may  
21 comprise of a means for imparting a downward thrust on  
22 the inner section sufficient to cause the inner section  
23 to move in a down-hole direction relative to the outer  
24 drilling section. The means may include an obturating  
25 member for obstructing the flow of drilling mud so as to  
26 enable increased pressure to be obtained above the inner  
27 section, the pressure being adapted to impart the  
28 downward thrust.

29

30 Typically, the direction of displacement of the outer  
31 section has a radial component.

32

33 Also according to the invention there is provided a  
34 casing drilling shoe adapted for attachment to a casing

1       6  
2       string, wherein the shoe comprises an outer drilling  
3       section constructed of a relatively hard material and an  
4       inner section constructed of a readily drillable  
5       material, and wherein means is provided for controllably  
6       displacing the outer drilling section to a position  
7       whereby it does not interfere with subsequent drilling  
8       through the shoe for the placement of further casing or a  
9       liner down-hole.

10      13  
11      An embodiment of the invention will now be described by  
12      way of example only and with reference to the  
13      accompanying Figures, in which:

14      16  
15      Figure 1 is an end view of a drill casing shoe or  
16      tool in accordance with the invention;

17      19  
18      Figure 2 shows a sectional view in elevation of a  
19      tool of Figure 1 attached to the end of a casing  
20      string;

21      23  
22      Figure 3 shows the tool in its normal drilling mode;  
23      and

24      26  
25      Figures 4 and 5 show the tool in respective further  
26      stages activated and ready for cementing and  
27      subsequent drilling.

28      29  
29      Referring firstly to Figures 1 and 2, a drilling shoe is  
30      generally depicted at 1. The drilling shoe 1 has an  
31      outer drilling section 2 having blades 3. The blades 3  
32      are made of a hard material such as steel which may  
33      incorporate a cutting structure of polycrystalline  
34      diamond or tungsten carbide for example. They may be of

1 industry standard type and or designed to suit particular  
2 formations to be drilled by the tool.

3

4 In Figures 1 and 2, the outer drilling section 2 is in  
5 the drilling mode and, as such, the shoe 1 is incapable  
6 of being drilled through by standard drill bits.

7

8 The tool 1 is further provided with an inner section 4  
9 which, in the embodiment shown, comprises a generally  
10 cylindrical member having ports 5 in its lower region to  
11 allow for the passage of drilling mud to the end or  
12 drilling face of the tool or shoe 1. The ports 5  
13 communicate via feed passages 8 with a single circular  
14 bore 6, the bore 6 providing a circulation path for  
15 drilling mud or lubricant. The tool 1 is also provided  
16 with an anti-rotation pin 14 to prevent the inner section  
17 spinning when being drilled out.

18

19 Notably, the bore 6 is adapted to be obstructed or  
20 blocked. For example, the bore 6 in the example  
21 embodiment includes a ball seat 7 such that upon dropping  
22 a ball sized to land on the seat 7, the bore 6 becomes  
23 obstructed enabling an operator to pressure-up behind the  
24 bore. It will be known to persons skilled in the art  
25 that other methods may be employed for this purpose, such  
26 as dropping darts and so on.

27

28 As may be seen in Figure 3, the inner section 4 is  
29 captured between the blades 3 of the outer drilling  
30 section and, at its upper end, a locking ring 9.

31

32 In use, when the tool 1 is in its drilling mode, drilling  
33 mud may be pumped down the inside of the casing, through  
34 the bore 6 and subsequently through the ports 5 in the

1 inner section 4. The mud, while providing a lubricant,  
2 also serves to clean the face of the tool and is able to  
3 return up the annulus between the casing and the well  
4 bore (not shown). During this process, there would be a  
5 small downward thrust on the inner section 4 due to the  
6 pressure drop of the mud passing through the ports 5.  
7 This thrust would not be sufficient to displace the  
8 blades 3 of the outer section 2 relative to the rest of  
9 the tool 1.

10

11 However, when the drilling process is complete, it is a  
12 feature of this invention that the tool or shoe may be  
13 manipulated or activated to render it drillable.  
14 Activation may be achieved by applying a relatively large  
15 downward thrust to the inner portion 4.

16

17 In the example embodiment illustrated in the accompanying  
18 Figures, the downward thrust results from blocking the  
19 bore 6 or flow passages 8 feeding the ports 5 by landing  
20 a ball 10 on the rest 7 (see Figure 4). The ball 10 may  
21 be dropped from surface or, preferably, may be released  
22 from a remotely actuated mechanism positioned just above  
23 the tool 1. Again, methods of achieving remote ball  
24 release are known to persons skilled in the art and  
25 include, for example, increasing the flow rate of the  
26 drilling mud or circulation fluid to a level whereby a  
27 support for the ball in its mechanism is overcome. These  
28 and other ball release subs are known in the industry.

29

30 After the ball 10 is seated, pump pressure rises and the  
31 downward thrust load on the inner section 4 increases.  
32 This thrust load is transferred to the blades 3  
33 positioned at the leading end of the tool 1. The design  
34 of the blades 3 is such that they can be displaced by a

9  
1 predetermined load, well below the maximum safe pressure  
2 that the casing can withstand. When this load is reached  
3 the blades 3 are displaced outwardly in the manner of  
4 downward pointing fingers, while the inner section 4  
5 advances downwardly until its motion is arrested by  
6 mating shoulder portions 11 of the inner and outer  
7 sections 2,4. In Figure 4 the inner section 4 has been  
8 fully displaced.

9  
10 It is to be further noted that the outer section 2 is  
11 provided with ports 12. In the normal drilling mode, the  
12 ports 12 are obstructed by the sleeve 13 as circulation  
13 is enabled via the ports 5. However, as may be seen in  
14 Figure 4, the fluid communication ports 12 are caused to  
15 open, that is become unobstructed as the sleeve 13  
16 travels down with the inner section 4 under the influence  
17 of the downward thrust. This fulfills the necessary  
18 requirement of re-establishing circulation at this point,  
19 since the cementing operation involves pumping the cement  
20 slurry down the inside of the casing and displacing it  
21 into the annulus. An added advantage lies in the fact  
22 that the operators of the tool are given a clear signal  
23 that the tool has activated properly since on opening the  
24 ports 12 the pressure level will fall significantly.

25  
26 In Figure 4, it can be seen that the components that  
27 rendered the tool incapable of being drilled have now  
28 been displaced to a position where they will not  
29 interfere with the next drill bit to be used.

30  
31 Cementing of the casing may then be undertaken and after  
32 the cement has set hard, drilling the next of hole  
33 section may commence. This would typically involve  
34 passing a drill bit of appropriate diameter through the

10

1 centre of the casing string and performing a drilling out  
2 operation of the inner section 4. As the inner section is  
3 made of a readily drillable material, such as aluminium,  
4 this does not present any of the difficulties encountered  
5 in the past. In Figure 5, the tool is shown after the  
6 drilling-out operation has been completed, it is clear  
7 from this view that the bit (which is not shown) is only  
8 required to progress through components that were  
9 constructed from drillable materials.

10

11 By the use of this tool it has been shown that a  
12 significant advantage can be obtained and that major cost  
13 savings can be released. In particular, the present  
14 invention negates the requirement of having to retrieve  
15 the drill string and drill bit before cementing the  
16 casing. The invention further negates or at least  
17 mitigates any requirement for milling. Importantly, the  
18 tool incorporates a mechanism which when activated allows  
19 the tool to be drilled through with a conventional  
20 oilfield drill bit without causing damage to said bit.

21

22 It should be appreciated herein that the described and  
23 illustrated apparatus and method is only one of many  
24 possible techniques. Further modifications and  
25 improvements may be incorporated without departing from  
26 the scope of the invention herein intended.

1 **CLAIMS:**

2

3 1. A casing drilling shoe adapted for attachment to a  
4 casing string, wherein the shoe comprises an outer  
5 drilling section constructed of a relatively hard  
6 material and an inner section constructed of a readily  
7 drillable material, and wherein means is provided for  
8 controllably displacing the outer drilling section to  
9 enable the shoe to be drilled through using a standard  
10 drill bit and subsequently penetrated by a reduced  
11 diameter casing string or liner.

12

13 2. A drilling shoe as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the  
14 outer section is made of steel and the inner section  
15 may be made of aluminium.

16

17 3. A drilling shoe as claimed in Claim 1 or Claim 2,  
18 wherein the outer section is provided with one or more  
19 blades, wherein the blades are moveable from a first or  
20 drilling position to a second or displaced position.

21

22 4. A drilling shoe as claimed in Claim 3, wherein when the  
23 blades are in the first or drilling position they  
24 extend in a lateral or radial direction to such extent  
25 as to allow for drilling to be performed over the full  
26 face of the shoe.

27

28 5. A drilling shoe as claimed in any one of the preceding  
29 Claims, wherein displacing means for displacing the  
30 outer drilling section comprises of a thrust means for  
31 imparting a downward thrust on the inner section  
32 sufficient to cause the inner section to move in a  
33 down-hole direction relative to the outer drilling  
34 section.

12

- 1 6. A drilling shoe as claimed in any one of the preceding  
2 Claims, where the displacing means includes an  
3 obturating member for obstructing the flow of drilling  
4 mud so as to enable increased pressure to be obtained  
5 above the inner section, the pressure being adapted to  
6 impart the downward thrust.
- 7
- 8 7. A drilling shoe as claimed in any one of the preceding  
9 Claims, wherein the direction of displacement of the  
10 outer section has a radial component.
- 11
- 12 8. A casing drilling shoe adapted for attachment to a  
13 casing string, wherein the shoe comprises an outer  
14 drilling section constructed of a relatively hard  
15 material and an inner section constructed of a readily  
16 drillable material, and wherein means is provided for  
17 controllably displacing the outer drilling section to a  
18 position whereby it does not interfere with subsequent  
19 drilling through the shoe for the placement of further  
20 casing or a liner down-hole.

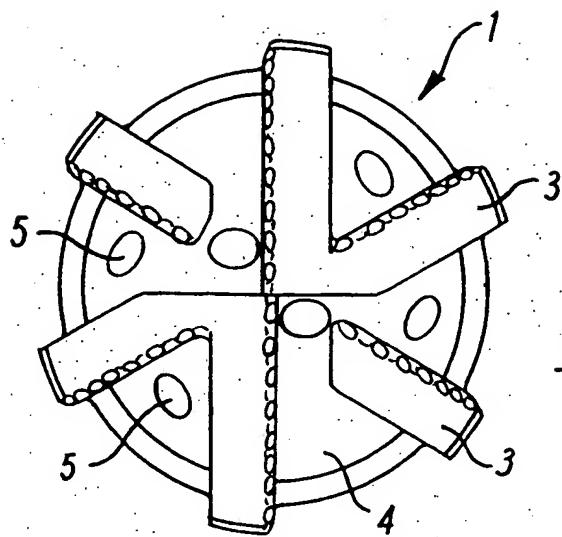


Fig. 1

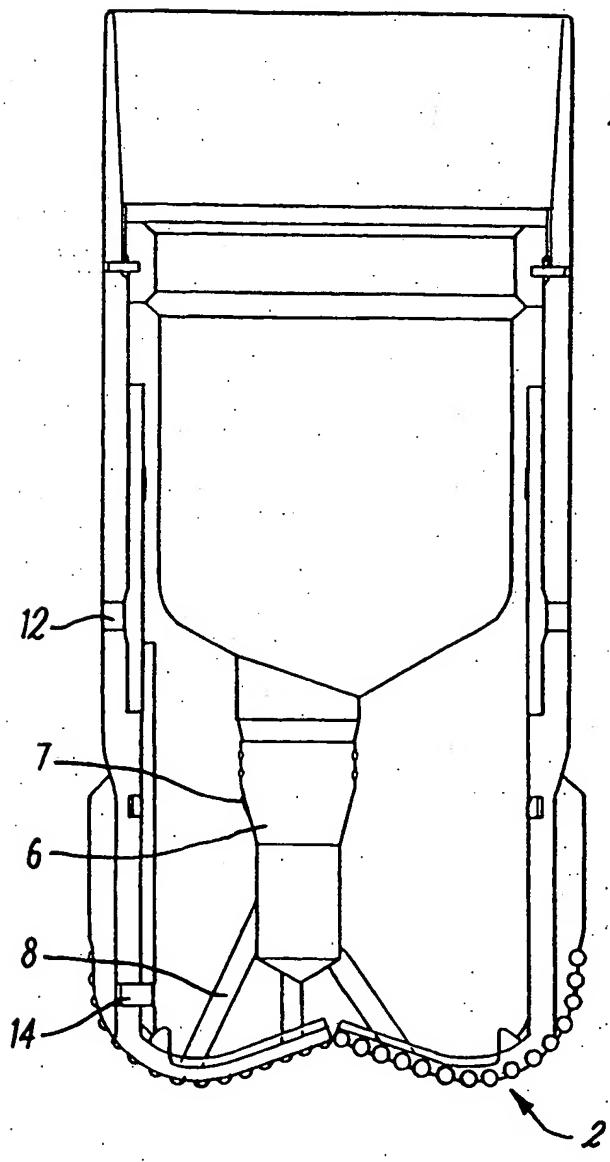


Fig. 2

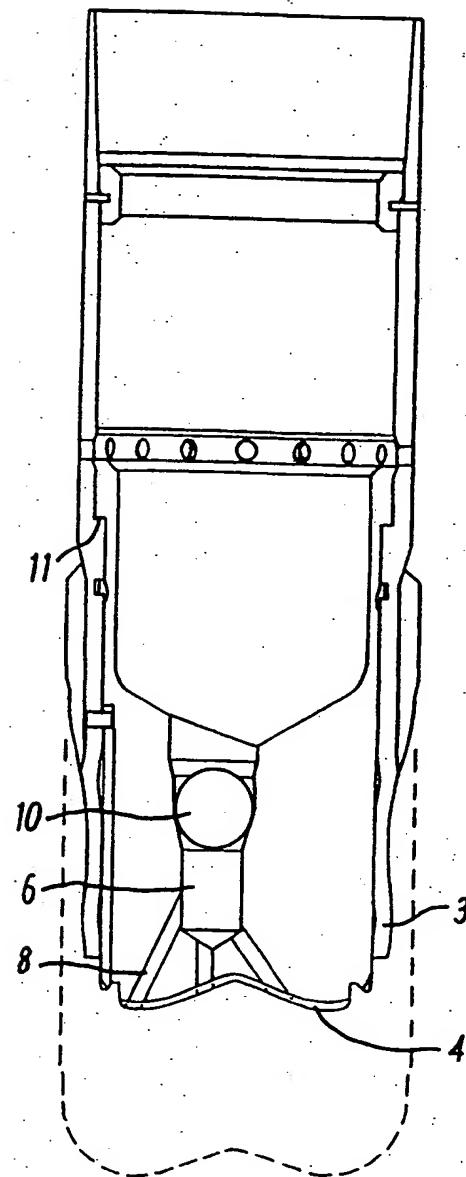
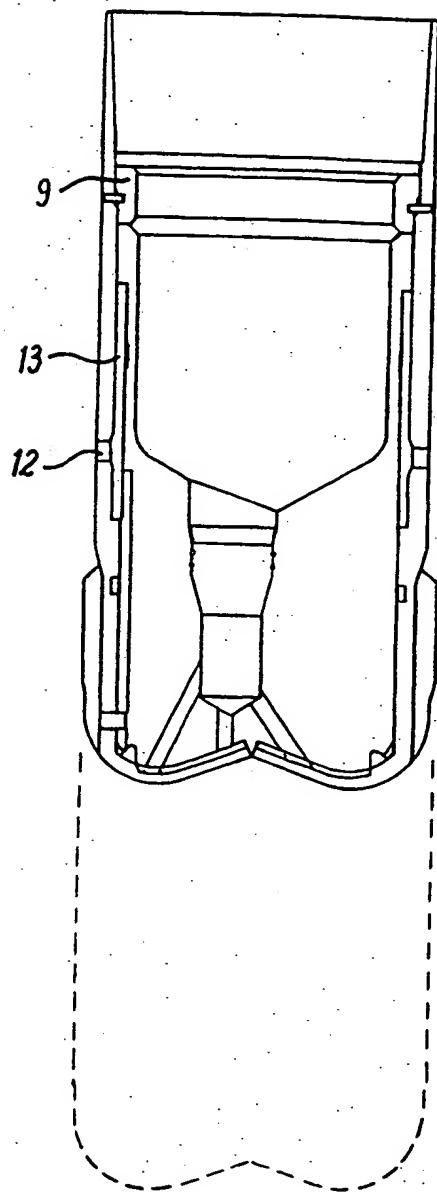


Fig. 3

Fig. 4

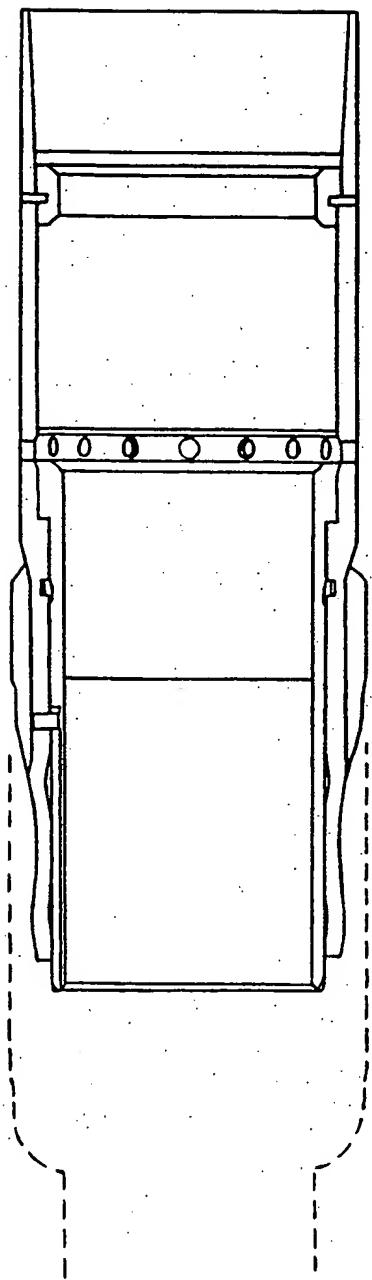


FIG. 5

## INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No

PCT/GB 99/01816

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER  
 IPC 6 E21B/20 E21B10/62

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

## B. FIELDS SEARCHED

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 IPC 6 E21B

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## C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	WO 96 28635 A (BRIT BIT LIMITED ;STRONG PHILLIP. (GB); WARDLEY MICHAEL (GB)) 19 September 1996 (1996-09-19) page 7, line 30 -page 8, line 34	1-4,7,8
Y	page 10, line 28 -page 11, line 9; claims 3,4,13,23; figures 3,4	5,6
Y	US 5 127 482 A (RECTOR JR CLARENCE A) 7 July 1992 (1992-07-07) column 4, line 26 - line 45; figures 4,5	5,6
A	GB 2 170 528 A (SEABOURN ED OSCAR) 6 August 1986 (1986-08-06)	
A	US 2 940 731 A (POOLE, M.L.) 14 June 1960 (1960-06-14)	

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Patent family members are listed in annex.

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Information on patent family members

International Application No

PCT/GB 99/01816

Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
WO 9628635	A 19-09-1996	AT 174403 T AU 4950396 A CA 2214749 A DE 69601129 D EP 0815342 A NO 974181 A	15-12-1998 02-10-1996 19-09-1996 21-01-1999 07-01-1998 05-11-1997
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